DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 358 SO 020 504

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TITLE Multicultural and Global Education: Seeking Common Ground. Issues in Education.
INSTITUTION Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa.
REPORT NO TSF-3K-689
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 19p.; Summary of a conference cosponsored by Las Palomas de Taos, REACH Center for Multicultural and Global Education, and the Stanley Foundation (Taos, N.M., January 27-29, 1989). For related documents, see SO 020 503-505.
AVAILABLE FROM Stanley Foundation, 420 E. Third St., Muscatine, IA 52761 (single copies free).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship Education; Cooperation; Cooperative Planning; Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Global Approach; Group Unity; *Humanistic Education; *Multicultural Education; *Objectives

ABSTRACT

Multicultural education deals with human diversity at the domestic level. It incorporates the study of racial and ethnic differences, as well as issues related to gender, age, socioeconomic status, and physical disabilities. Its primary goals are to create a sense of understanding and respect for differences, to overcome prejudice and discrimination, to provide an understanding of the dynamics of racism, to replace historical and cultural distortions with accurate information, and to assure that all students receive equitable benefits from the educational system. Global education deals with diversity at the global level. Its primary focus is on those interrelated systems that affect the entire planet. The primary goals of global education are to build understanding and respect for peoples and nations outside the United States, to transcend the narrow Western-centric bias that pervades much of traditional curriculum, to provide an understanding of the dynamics of imperialism and oppression, to create awareness of the earth as an interrelated and holistic system. The relationship between multicultural and global education is interactive. To understand one's own cultural roots and that others may have very different cultural experience means little until learners have examined the impact this diversity has on the world. And learners need to understand that individual behavior and choices can have global consequences in an interdependent world. Programs from either perspective should not be implemented in isolation from the other. (JB)

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Issues in Education:

Multicultural and Global Education: Seeking Common Ground

In this conference summary, the authors endeavor to share a number of valuable insights that emerged from the discussion of the relationship between multicultural and global education. This report is not intended as a statement of consensus since there may be numerous views and interpretations mentioned here that were not shared by all who were present.

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Issues in Education:

Multicultural and Global Education: Seeking Common Ground

A conference cosponsored by:

Las Palomas de Taos

REACH Center for Multicultural and Global Education

The Stanley Foundation

January 27-29, 1989
Taos, New Mexico

During the weekend of January 27, 1989, twenty-five educators gathered at Las Palomas de Taos in Taos, New Mexico, for a weekend Issues in Education conference sponsored by Las Palomas; the Stanley Foundation of Muscatine, Iowa; and the REACH Center of Arlington, Washington. The conference theme, "Multicultural and Global Education: Seeking Common Ground," was developed in response to the need which had been expressed by leaders in both fields to clarify the relationship between multicultural and global education, to realistically assess the areas of both tension and compatibility, and to explore the potential for mutually beneficial work in the years ahead.

The conference brought together a group of professionals who have made significant contributions to one or both of the fields being discussed. The participants represented a healthy multiethnic mix and a rich background of experience on both the multicultural and global dimensions. The conversation was lively, wide-ranging, thoughtful, and often profound. And, perhaps surprisingly, while there was no intent or attempt to produce a consensus statement from the proceedings, discussions revealed numerous points of agreement.

Participants at the Las Palomas conference agreed that the time has come to look closely at the interrelationship between multicultural and global education. In what ways are the two educational movements separate and distinct educational phenomena, and in what ways are they similar? Who are the proponents of each movement? What are the goals of each field? In what ways are the goals compatible, complementary, or contradictory? To what extent should multicultural and global education be merged, and to what extent should they remain separate?

Definition of Terms

In general terms, multicultural education deals with human diversity at the domestic level, which for US education means diversity within the United States. Multicultural education incorporates the study of racial and ethnic differences, as well as issues related to gender, age, socioeconomic status, and physical disabilities. The primary goals of multicultural education are to create a sense of understanding and respect for differences, to overcome prejudice and discrimination, to provide an understanding of the dynamics of racism, to replace historical and cultural distortions with accurate information, and to assure that all students receive equitable benefits from the educational system.

Global education, on the other hand, is concerned with the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world. It deals with diversity at the global level. Global education can include the study of relationships between individual nations, but its primary focus is on those interrelated systems (economic, ecological, political, cultural) that affect the entire planet. The primary goals of global education are to build understanding and respect for peoples and nations outside the United States, to transcend the narrow Western-centric bias that pervades much of traditional curriculum, to provide an understanding of the dynamics of imperialism and oppression, to create awareness of the earth as an interrelated and holistic system, and to prepare all students to be effective citizens in a global age.

Although the goals and basic purposes of global and multicultural education are quite similar, the two movements have for the most part been acted out on different stages and by different actors. Multicultural education has been primarily concerned with issues and diverse populations within the United States, and its leadership has come predominantly from the various minority communities: African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American. Global education, on the other hand, has dealt with issues and concerns that affect the United States from

outside our borders, and the leadership and participants have come primarily, and in some cases almost exclusively, from among white educators and leaders in business and government.

An Intricate Relationship

Participants agreed that a very intricate relationship exists between multicultural education and global education. Often the image of the yin and yang symbol was evoked. Global and multicultural education share and address many of the same goals. They both encourage teaching about such themes as valuing diversity, understanding multiple perspectives, resolving conflict effectively, and recognizing the importance of tolerance. But, while there are close ties between the two types of education, everyone also agreed that they are not the same.

Instead the relationship between the two is interactive. Each effort both teaches and learns from the other. In today's world it seems impossible to do one without doing the other. As one participant observed, "We live in a multicultural, global society." To understand the nature of the globe today, one must understand the fact that there are many cultures interacting; to understand the significance of culture today, one must perceive it in its fully global context.

Discussion revealed that participants think that multicultural education focuses inward and helps students understand that culture significantly shapes each individual. Global education, on the other hand, tends to be more outwardly focused. It calls attention to systems and dynamic interaction between conditions, events, and people. Clearly then, neither kind of understanding can stand without the other. To understand one's own cultural roots and that others may have very different cultural experience means little until learners have examined the impact this diversity has on the world. And learners need to understand that individual behavior and choices can have global consequences in an interdependent world.

Even though it is important at this time to maintain a separate identity for both multicultural and global education, programs from either perspective should not be implemented in isolation from the other. In practical terms, this means that global education programs and materials should include adequate recognition and coverage of issues and implications relevant to domestic diversity. An analysis of conflict in the Middle East, for example, should include a multicultural perspective on how that particular global issue affects those US citizens whose national and ethnic roots are tied to the countries and peoples involved in the conflict. Similarly, a classroom unit which explores apartheid in South Africa should include some comparative study of the dynamics of racism and oppression in the United States.

Likewise, those multicultural programs and classroom activities that deal with diversity within the United States, should consistently build bridges to the international and global dimension. For example, any educational materials which deal with the growing populations of Asian Americans or Latinos in the United States, should include an analysis of global influences, including US intervention, which have led to the increased flow of immigrants from those areas. Similarly, a study of the historical and contemporary experiences of Native Americans can be greatly enhanced by drawing on the comparative experiences of indigenous peoples on other continents.

Participants at the conference agreed that multicultural and global education are necessarily linked, yet importantly distinct. They were convinced that the two educational movements must begin to work more closely together, learn from one another, and deal more effectively with the issues of diversity both at home and abroad. Now and in the future, either of these movements that does not draw on the insights and perspectives of the other will be severely limited. Global and international education programs which do not deal adequately with issues of domestic diversity

and racism in the United States are simply elitist. Likewise, domestic multicultural education programs which do not speak adequately to the global dimensions of diversity and oppression are out of touch with present realities of planetary interdependence.

Each approach offers a unique analysis and perspective and has much to teach the other. Multicultural and global education should be seen as interdependent and cooperative educational movements, not competitive or antagonistic. It was also agreed that it is too early in the development of either movement to merge them under one title or umbrella term. Since the two movements have for the most part been implemented by separate groups of educational leaders, the primary need now is for increased dialogue, exploration, and collaboration. By expanding the kind of interactive process initiated at the Las Palomas conference, leaders of both movements can discover areas of mutuality, build bridges of cooperation, and hopefully create a more powerful impact on US education than either could do alone.

Common Ground

In addition to agreeing about the complementary nature of the two endeavors, participants agreed that both global and multicultural understandings are crucial to any reasonable education today. In fact, most people spoke of them as survival issues. If people do not come to understand themselves as part of a global, multicultural world and do not learn to live well in such a context, then there is little reason to expect the species to survive. "What we seek," said one participant, "is success in the mess."

Most participants agreed that, in a multicultural, global world, universal human concerns need to override specific cultural differences. Culture no longer is a sufficient organizer for all knowledge.

Participants also agreed that both global and

multicultural understandings require more than a linear, rational teaching and learning process. Attempts to deepen understanding of such matters requires dealing with reason, intellect, emotion, and with subconscious and even unconscious aspects of the human mind. There was no effort to cite one aspect of mind as "more important" than any other. One participant did caution, however, that current education practice is heavily rational, and she said, "When you think logically, you leave a lot out."

Participants acknowledged that there has been a temptation to find the two efforts in competition, each group feeling the other was capturing an unfair portion of available funding. And they were reminded that there is danger in perceiving the movements in a world of opponents. Basic and economic needs are best served when common ground is sought.

The issue of self-interest was regularly raised and most agreed that both global and multicultural teaching requires that people come to better understand the connection between their own interests and that of others. "We need to teach people a new definition of self-interest," said one.

This discussion led participants to acknowledge that not everyone shares these views; in fact, the concerns raised have significant political ramifications. There are definitely those in society who believe their world view is the right one and that everyone else should adapt by agreeing with them. These people do not want anyone to spend much time learning about other views, and they certainly do not want to allow that there can be two or three or myriad equally valid and sometimes conflicting perspectives on any issue. These opponents of global and multicultural education will strive to be obstructive.

Given the best of all possible worlds, the concerns of multicultural and global education could be brought together under one common term: **good education**. However, precisely because so

much present educational practice remains under the domination of monocultural and Western-centric notions, it is essential that these two educational movements maintain their separate identities and momentum. At the same time, however, it is paramount that multicultural and global education practitioners begin to work more closely to draw on each other's strengths and to help bring the entire educational enterprise into meaningful dialogue with the realities of the twenty-first century.

Implications, Issues, and Puzzles

The comments that follow draw out of the conference those insights, questions, and implications which emerge from the interface of multicultural and global education. Because each of these educational movements is relatively young and fluid in itself, their relationship is necessarily dynamic and changing. The following comments, therefore, are like snapshots, slices of time, that will have one meaning now and another later.

Political Realities

A clear implication growing out of our discussion is that multicultural and global educators may need to be willing and prepared to deal with the undertaking in a political arena. We must be prepared to be advocates for this work that we all see as crucial to human survival. A number of cautions were raised in this regard. We need to educate ourselves and be clear about our positions. We need to learn and develop political strategies, nurture key people, and be ready when political opportunities or challenges present themselves. We need to be careful about building an adequate balance of diverse perspectives into our programs and materials.

Valuing Conflicts

Our discussion of politics raised another problem: how do we distinguish between adhering to our values and imposing them on others? Those of us who seek to honor all views are caught in a paradox when dealing with those views that directly contradict our own: If I allow you to continue to

practice your values, I may violate other values including my own. How we deal sensitively with these value conflicts is a critical factor for both multicultural and global education.

Understanding Racism

Perhaps chief among the issues that confront us is the continuing specter of racism. We acknowledged our own reluctance and resistance to engage this difficult matter. To consider the role of race in human affairs is difficult; such discussion calls our self-perceptions into question; and we may find ourselves at fault, mistaken, misunderstood. The discussion is fraught with false expectations, erroneous assumptions, misunderstandings, linguistic traps. But the discussion must be undertaken and continued if our work is to succeed. At Las Palomas, we discovered a need to move beyond a surface-level analysis of racism. We need to establish a deeper level of honesty and trust between white educators and educators of color. We need to learn how to explore our real questions, concerns, and fears -- and not merely stay at the safe levels of discourse. Breaking new ground in our understanding of racism is critically important in the relationship between multicultural and global education.

Dealing with Oppression

Our work often engages us in examining the workings of oppression and its implications both personally and globally. For many people, understanding their own culture requires first overcoming the distorting and often degrading effects of cultural imperialism. And more generally speaking, the effects of oppression are global and the consequences of either continuing or reversing it are pervasive. Therefore, helping people understand the nature of oppression is a central and difficult activity for both global and multicultural educators. In such endeavors we will always risk accusations of bias, propagandizing, and intolerance. When is it fair to label something as oppressive? Is capitalism oppressive? The Sandanistas? Apartheid?

Reform versus Revolution
Much discussion involved the nature of US education. Can this system produce the kind of education that global and multicultural educators envision and desire? To what extent does the US educational system need to be radically transformed versus gradually reformed? To what extent do multicultural and global education challenge the basic assumptions of the US education system, and to what extent are these two movements actually the embodiment of that vision?

Conflict of Cultures
Perhaps the knottiest puzzles grew out of the tension between cultural survival and the need for healthy conflict management. In all cultures there are ethnocentric values that oppose the goals for tolerance and valuing of diversity. How do we honor all cultures and support the continuing of their traditions while at the same time rising above those cultural limitations that could threaten our unity and survival as a planet?

Ethnocentrism
And we struggled valiantly with our own Americanism. Ninety-five percent of the world is non-American, we reminded ourselves. But we quickly reverted to hailing US values of free choice and individualism. "Individualism is seen as a handicap by many people on the globe," we were told. Do we truly, as some claim, live in a world where significant numbers of people do not understand themselves to have control of their own lives? How, if we think we are free, do we live with people who do not believe they are free?

American Competitiveness
We recognized that much of the growing momentum in support of global education in this country comes from a desire to maintain and improve the economic and political position of the United States in the world. Many of the national mandates for global education, particularly the most recent one from the state governors, call for educational improvements to increase US competitiveness in the global marketplace.

While recognizing the importance of this concern, many conference participants raised serious questions about the possibility of the economic competitiveness agenda playing too large a role in determining the scope and direction of global education. What would happen to our concerns for teaching about equity, justice, peace, and environmental survival if the primary support and motivation behind global education were to come from sources whose chief concern was for maintaining US predominance in the global economy?

And from the multicultural side, what does the US competitiveness argument say to poor and minority Americans who have seen their own position worsen over the past decade? Given our national backsliding on civil rights, the decrease in funds for poor and minority higher education, and the increase of the gap between the rich and the poor, many Americans could perceive that the "Keep America #1" motivation of some global education advocates could be in direct conflict with concerns for equity and social justice. This issue has been one of the sources of separation and occasional conflict between multicultural and global educators.

US Contributions

Conference participants also recognized that the United States has much to offer the rest of the world in terms of valuing diversity. We have a rich history of attempting to forge unity out of diversity. We have a strong legal and ethical tradition supporting the rights of individuals to maintain their unique expressions, beliefs, and practices, while at the same time contributing to the nation as a unified whole.

This US experience and commitment to diversity needs to be shared in positive ways with the rest of the world. Global survival depends on all nations' abilities to honor human differences, to build global unity while maintaining the world's rich diversity. We in the United States are not the only people on the planet who have struggled with these issues, and we have certainly not

always lived up to our own ideals, but we do have very valuable and unique lessons to share with our fellow humans. This need to deal imaginatively with the unity/diversity theme on the planetary level is one area where the goals and practices of both multicultural and global education should be inextricably tied.

Dynamics of Change

Without question everyone acknowledged the dynamic nature of our undertaking. The interaction between multicultural and global education will continue to evolve as human circumstances change. Therefore, any conclusions that apply today will need to be reexamined with care and regularity. There are no final statements that close our discussion. Perhaps someday, though, both multicultural and global education will be seen as so patently synonymous with good education that there will be no need for further talk about them as discrete concerns.

Note: For excellent further analysis of the relationship between multicultural and global education, see the article written by Laurien Alexandre in the Winter 1989 edition of *Global Pages*, the newsletter of the Immaculate Heart College Center, 1095 West Pico Boulevard, Suite 2021, Los Angeles, CA 90064 (213) 470-2293.

Las Palomas de Taos

Las Palomas de Taos, a nonprofit educational organization, is centered in the historic Mabel Dodge Luhan house in Taos, New Mexico. This colorful setting at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo mountains hosts a tri-cultural community, providing visitors with unique living and learning experiences.

As an educational center, Las Palomas sponsors a number of diverse learning opportunities, including workshops for educators, art experiences, elderhostels, youth adventure programs, seminars about the Southwest, and retreats. Las Palomas programs help people create positive ways of living with and valuing diversity and change.

Box 3400
Taos, New Mexico 87571

REACH Center

The REACH Center for Multicultural and Global Education is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to helping Americans deal effectively with diversity in both its domestic and global dimensions. REACH Center staff members and consultants provide services to schools, businesses, and social service and government agencies throughout the country.

Programs include: REACH for Kids, a K-6 multicultural and global curriculum and training program; Project REACH, a middle school multicultural reconceptualizing of US history; Global REACH, a multidisciplinary inservice program for high schools; and REACH for Excellence, a professional and management training program for dealing effectively with diversity in the workplace.

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The Stanley Foundation

The Stanley Foundation works toward the goal of a secure peace with freedom and justice. Programs are planned, administered, and funded by the foundation, and all are focused on foreign relations and international education.

The foundation fosters involvement in world affairs through several different avenues, one of which is an extensive educator support program. Building on nearly twenty years of experience in the Muscatine, Iowa, schools, educator support now involves students and educators nationwide and concentrates on global themes through summer workshops, conferences, teaching aids, and program consultation.

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